theTorch

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Spotlight on Women's Health

by Robyn Schoenberg and Ava

Co-News Editor and Match Editor-in-Chief

During the mid-1900s the lobotomy was a common neurosurgical treatment that was most often performed on women. It was meant to treat mental illnesses and hysteria — a word that's derived from the Greek word for uterus — and involved cutting or removing the prefrontal cortex.

What is now a discredited practice and considered an example of the outstanding lack of medical research of the past reflects centuries-old ideals that shape clinical perspectives today.

Women's health is widely under-researched and misunderstood, leading to the prevalent mistreatment of female patients.

According to the National Library of Medicine (NLM), the gender gap in research may result in delays of treatment for women or the use of inappropriate, ineffective, or even harmful treatments.

This can have a detrimental effect on women's health physically and mentally. Medical



occur in males — and a lack of awareness about how they affect females — contributes to the higher rates of females dying from heart attacks."

Evidence of this can be seen in the case of Pine View math teacher, Kathleen Suchora, who suffered from endometriosis at 16. She said her doctor was in "disbelief that a 16-year-old could possibly have endometriosis," so it was not until she was in college that a different

doctor properly diagnosed

her.
For reference, according to the NLM, endometriosis is "an estrogen-dependent disease affecting 10% of females in which endometrial-like tissue grows outside the uterus, resulting in pain, infertility, and physical and psychosocial dysfunction."

Even though it affects one in 10 women, it is misdiagnosed 75.2% of the time.

Whether conscious or subconscious, many women's symptoms are initially dismissed and attributed to mental distress or illness. This makes women feel as though their symptoms are normal or that they are just being "dramatic," something a male counterpart would not

experience as often.

"I don't think they necessarily do this only with women, but I think they do it to women more," Suchora said.

"They make us feel like we are complaining when we are the ones who know what's going on with us."

Critical misunderstandings of female medicine, such as in Suchora's case, can be linked to the lack of research on women's health.

For example, from 1977 to 1993, the FDA excluded "women of childbearing potential" from clinical trials,

and the general inclusion of women in medical studies wasn't even required in the US until 1993 — around when many millennials were born.

If there is biased sampling, "anything that you say is not backed up by anything," although Suchora also points

[T]he general inclusion of women in medical studies wasn't even required in the US until 1993.

out that due to random sampling there is a chance that a study could naturally exclude women of child-bearing years, which minimizes the potential effect of this FDA policy.

This year, the Biden Administration issued the Exec-

Entertainment, p.6

utive Order
on Advancing Women's
Health Research
and Innovation released with the main
goal of closing these
health disparities.

The executive order said, "For far too long, scientific and biomedical research excluded women and undervalued the study of women's health. The resulting research gaps mean that we know far too little about women's health across women's lifespans..."

These research gaps can be seen in studies such as those on the leading cause of death worldwide, heart disease. Although it is the leading killer for both men and women, "women comprised less than 40% of all people enrolled in cardiovascular clinical trials between 2010-2017," according to the American Heart Association.

A common misconception is that men and women can be treated as interchangeable subjects in research, so this would have little effect, but "research has shown that biological differences between men and women...may contribute to variations seen in the safety and efficacy of drugs, biologics, and medical devices," according to the FDA.

Even in heart disease, men and women can have different risk factors, symptoms, and treatment requirements.

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Fantastic Fantasy Football

A dive into a teacher fantasy football
league on campus since 2009



A Cybertruck Adventure
The Cybertruck is put to the test on
Mars

From Sketch to Stage
Explore the many talents of junior Ginger
Kreithen!

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TRUMP'S SECOND TERM **AGENDA**

ALL INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND ON DONALDJTRUMP.COM UNDER "PLATFORM." THE GOALS LISTED HERE WERE CHOSEN BASED ON RELEVANCE AND CLARITY.

RESTORE TRUMP'S **IMMIGRATION LAWS AND BORDER POLICIES**

CUT BACK ON OIL, NATURAL GAS, AND COAL RESTRICTIONS

REBUILD ALLIANCES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND STAND WITH ISRAEL

LIFT RESTRICTIONS ON AMERICAN **ENERGY PRODUCTION AND TERMINATE** THE GREEN NEW DEAL

SUPPORT TARIFFS ON FOREIGN-MADE GOODS

MAKE TRUMP'S TAX LAWS PERMANENT

SUPPORT A NEW FEDERAL TASK FORCE ON FIGHTING ANTI-CHRISTIAN BIAS

INVEST IN MILITARY TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING AN IRON DOME MISSILE **DEFENSE SHIELD**

CLOSE THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

END TEACHER TENURE AND ADOPT MERIT PAY

GRAPHIC BY MADELYN BAILEY AND ROBYN SCHOENBERG

Popular Vote vs. Electoral College



by Timothy Nesanelis

Match Asst. Editor-in-Chief

Tens of millions of Floridians and other Americans went to the polls across the nation to vote in the United States' presidential election Nov. 5. People across Florida waited patiently for any word on the results...and then, they arrived.

At 8:01 p.m. EST, the Associated Press called that President Donald Trump would win the election in Florida, receiving the state's 30 electoral votes. Exactly one hour later, they also called that Wyoming would go to President Trump, who would receive the state's three electoral votes.

But why exactly does Wyoming, a state with 97% less registered voters, get 3.6 times the electoral representation as a Floridian voter? Why do millions of votes for Kamala Harris in Texas and Donald Trump in California simply go to waste? The answer, as with lots of American history, lies in compromise.

During the Constitutional Convention of 1787, there was fear on both sides of the political spectrum. Democratic-Republicans feared a strong executive government nominated by Congress, and the Federalists feared populist candidates, who would appeal to ill-informed voters, would

The solution was a system that merged the two ideas: the Electoral College.

"It's definitely contentious, but at the end of the day it was about making it fair for small states and large states, populated states and non-populated states," US Government and Politics Honors teacher Sean Murray said.

Today, every voter knows that the Electoral College decides the President of the United States, but much fewer know who or what exactly the college of "qualified electors" is comprised of.

The Electoral College adds together the representatives and the senate seats a state has to create the number of electoral votes they get. With Florida's 28 representatives and Wyoming's one, voters in Wyoming should get 1/28 of the representation that Florida gets based on their populations, but due to the added two senate seats that both Florida

three representatives respectively, Wyoming gets 1/10 of the representation, a huge increase for a state with about 250,000 registered vot-

During the presidential election is when the electors spring into action, usually giving out their electoral votes to the candidate that their state chose to elect.

"Once the people vote for their President in each of their states, [the elector] works and actually votes for the President," Murray said.

These electors are confirmed with a certificate of ascertainment inside state-level congresses and cannot be currently serving in the national government.

But after 60 presidential elections and over 200 years later, Americans seem to overwhelmingly favor a removal of the Electoral College. A Pew Research Center poll of 9,720 Americans conducted prior to the 2024 election found that 63% of voters supported an amendment to the Constitution

to use a popular vote system.

AP US History and African American History Honors teacher Scott Wolfinger is one of these Americans.

'I think it is antiquat-

ed and should be replaced," Wolfinger said. "I like the idea of everybody's vote being equal. Right now somebody in South Dakota's vote is a higher percentage in the electoral vote that is cast on their behalf than mine is, and I don't think that is

According to fairvote.org, over 700 proposed amendments have been introduced to change or remove the Electoral College, more than any other Constitutional subject in history. Multiple amendments passed in one chamber of Congress before dying in the other.

One very popular option seems to ask for a removal of the winner-takes-all method and instead go for a style where both major candidates can win electoral votes in a single state, similarly to how Maine and Nebraska operate today, both of which split up their electoral votes between Trump and Har-

Supporters of this splitstate method often see it as a way for more voices to be heard in our presidential election process, voices that otherwise may be silenced in deep-blue or deep-red states. However, Barry Burden, who heads the Elections Research Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, said in an interview with Nebraska Public

Media that a nation-wide split-ticket method based on Nebraska and Maine could open up the door to gerrymandering, the redistricting of certain voting districts to favor one party over the

But regardless of the pros and cons, Wolfinger points out that in our currently politically divided nation, a monumental change like the removal or modification of the electoral would take a miracle.

"Getting both [major political parties] to agree at a level that would lead to passing an amendment and then having 75% of the states ratify that amendment, it's just not going to happen under this political system," Wolfinger said.

With President Donald Trump's reelection victory with both the electoral and popular vote, a change could be in the near future, as Trump suggested abolishing the Electoral College to former Senate-majority leader Mitch McConnell, who shut the idea down. But the nation has to wait another four years for the next presidential election, and the divisive presidential process doesn't show any sign of ending for

news 📦

The New Standard SAT test-optional policies

by Jiayi Zhu

Editor-in-Chief

the midst COVID-19, navigating testing became incredibly problematic, and thus inaccessible. Besides that, learning in its entirety was in a downturn. Given these circumstances and their inability to accurately measure academic performance, many colleges and universities began the transition to what is now a familiar term: test-optional.

Before the pandemic, 47% of schools were test-optional, according to a tally by FairTest. Now, more than 80% of four-year colleges and universities remain test-optional. COVID-19 has left its mark but even post-pandemic, more than 1,700 schools are "permanently" test-optional or test-

College and Career Advisor Lance Bergman suggests that while the pandemic was the logistical catalyst for schools' transition to optional testing policies, many were waiting for a reason to do so anyway. Schools became test-informed, meaning test scores are considered but not the only factor. which allows applications to be read holistically.

"[Colleges] were thrilled, because what it would allow them then to do is to consider, on a more equal basis, students who were getting high GPAs at their schools, but were not resourced at all and did not have the same opportunities [as those at other schools]," Berg-

According to Bergman,

testing prevented a "full representation" of students because colleges were putting "so much stock in it." After implementing test-optional policies, colleges were hitting their target for first-generation admits, spending their endowments, and granting unprecedented opportunities to under-resourced students. "They want

those kids to be in their student body for good reason. One is, it's a promise of America. Education is the way to go. And just because a kid was born, let's say in an impoverished region or circumstances, they

nity," Bergman said. Children within the top 1% of wealthiest Americans were 13 times likelier than low-income children to score a 1300 or higher on the SAT, according to a 2023 paper by Opportunity Insights. Impoverished students often have limited access to higher level or advanced placement courses, experienced teachers, instructional materials, and exposure to academic language.

shouldn't be denied the opportu-

On the other hand, Pine View prepares students early on: by the time many students take the SAT or ACT, they are well-acquainted with not only the tested subjects, but also the nature of standardized testing as well. Senior Parker Wilding attributes part of his success on the ACT to the resources that were provided

"I've learned how to get into

the test mindset, how to be ready for tests, how to lock in when I need to. So I definitely think going to Pine View helped," Wilding said. "I don't think if I went to ane r school, I

would able to get as high of a score...[other schools] don't even get the test practice that Pine View offers, so it definitely helps with being prepared with that kind of

Because dents' performance on the SAT and ACT can be unfairly i m pactd dispacirstanc-1 e t ing scores determ i n e t h e difference b е tween accep-

that schools are looking for. "[Test scores] shouldn't be the most important, or even a very important metric because of how

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it doesn't represent the student as a student. It just represents how good they are at that specific kind of standardized test... it's just how good you did on that test, that day," Wilding said.

Still, there is a predictive quality to standardized test scores and college preparedness, considering they assess a student's academic literacy and familiarity with testing.

"So testing shows that a student has come in with academic language and has acquired a certain level of achievement, and so it provides insurance to colleges," Bergman said.

Despite benefits, test-optional policies come with a risk. Colleges and universities can't afford to remediate every class in which students are simply not ready. In March 2022, MIT reinstated testing requirements to better predict academic readiness. Some schools have also started requiring test scores to increase transparency lost in the application process — schools' average test scores have escalated due to students opting to apply as test-optional, even with perfectly acceptable scores.

Senior Leon Chen is taking advantage of test-optional policies. Both Chen and Wilding believe that extracurriculars should be a more critical part of the application.

"I'm going test optional, because I think if they see [my score] and also see my GPA, they may just think I'm a bad student," Chen said. "So by going test optional, they'll hopefully focus more of their attention on my extracurriculars...I hope they see that I'm a genuine person, not just a person with numbers."

Meanwhile, Florida colleges and universities have always been test-required, even throughout the pandemic. In contrast to test-optional schools, many students are admitted in high consideration of their test scores.

"I think they're too concerned about their reputations, and they use them as metrics to prove that they're exceptional institutions," Bergman said.

In contrast, the University of California and California State University systems are permanently test-blind, meaning that scores are not considered in their applications. While Bergman believes that many schools will stay test-informed, it is clear that these institutions wish to bridge socioeconomic and racial divides for a more diverse future.

"Diversity is why we're so powerful, right? It's why we have more patents. It's why people are more successful. Ingenuity happens," Bergman said. "[Top institutions] are places that know that they can find amazing minds without having to assess."

A Spotlight on Women's Health

by Ava Lenerz and Robyn Schoenberg

Match Editor-in-Chief and News Co-Editor

continued from page 1

Without accurate representation and research of women's health, it's also more difficult to find effective treatment options for diseases that commonly affect women.

Pine View High School student, who we'll call Evelyn, experienced this firsthand with her ovarian cysts.

According to the National Center for Biotechnology Information, ovarian cysts affect about 1 in 10 women and are small sacs that form in or on the ovary that can affect the menstrual cycle or cause pain.

"If they're not big enough, you can't get them surgically removed. So, you just have to let them rupture, and it's really painful," Evelyn said. "And so I ended up having a few secondary appointments to go to an OBGYN, and the only thing they really can do is put you on birth control." In cases like these, the first

step is to advocate for yourself. "They really do push birth

control on you, and if you don't want that, you really have to say: what else can I do?" Evelyn said.

This is the current reality many women endure for a variety of ailments, for example in the case of polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), a hormonal condition with a variety of symptoms. According to the World Health Organization, it's estimated to affect 8-13% of reproductive-aged women, yet its cause is unknown, there is no cure, and "up to 70% of cases are undiagnosed."

Historically, awareness has been a catalyst for change. Suchora recalls that when she started auditing radiologists for breast cancer detection rate, the chance of the cancer being detected through a mammogram was sigthan today. Since then, there have been



ments, s u c h that Susan Komen founder the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, that have inawareness creased and made an impact. "We are fortunate

that there are people who are willing to join studies to hopefully improve our lives," Suchora said. "Because we don't know what's going to happen with us... we have to rely on people before us to have been in a clinical study."

Regulating AI usage in classrooms

by Sivan Levy Web Editor-in-Chief nology

f i e d when AI is being used complete a task," and "Any misuse of AI tools and applications, such as hacking or altering data is strictly prohibited." com-

modate

these

phenomenons.

the Sarasota County School

District digitally released a

new set of AI guidelines in an

attempt to reduce the negative

effects that AI platforms were

creativity,

having on students and

teachers. These included

statements like, "AI is not

a substitute for human

September 3, 2024,

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While some may think many of these policies are simply stating the obvious, in today's world, no one can be too sure. Ever since the introduction of AI platforms like ChatGPT, there have been shifts in perspectives and ways of life worldwide. AI has guaranteed an answer to almost every question and a solution to many problems. In just a few short years since its release, it's served as a teacher, chef, advisor, and coach to many.

One of the main groups of people affected — both positively and negatively — by these platforms has been students. Many have used it pro-

tively, by utilizing it as a tool to understand a confusing question or problem. Others have used it to gather objective advice on things like which classes to take or which college to go to.

duc-

However, many have gone a separate route and have used it as a replacement for human thought and work, by exploiting it to dishonestly complete essays, homework assignments, or tests. This misusage has caused a steep decline in critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity skills.

Assistant Principal of Curriculum Lana Marcotte shared some thoughts via email interview on the effects of excessive AI usage that she observed.

"I believe it has sparked important conversations between teachers and students about academic integrity, digital literacy, and ethical use of AI. Our students are creative and innovative, and there is no substitute for their original ideas and expressions," she

Students using AI to com-

work has not only had ef fects on them but also on their teachers. Many teachers find themselves upset and frustrated, feeling that the countless hours they've poured into making lesson plans and creating engaging assignments has gone to waste.

school

Christopher Pauling, an AP English Language and Composition and AP Seminar teacher at Pine View, shared the efforts he makes in his classroom to combat the growing AI phenomenon among students.

"I've reviewed the [AI] policy with students at the beginning of the year. I also remind them regularly that it isn't worth the risk. I've also explained to them how accurate and detailed the reports are that our application provides,

AI has grown faster than almost anybody could have predicted. Today, ChatGPT has over two hundred million weekly users, only a few short years after its release. Completely putting a stop to its use would be impossible. Just like many other things, AI has a plethora of positives that can help advance society. However, these new district AI policies have helped to ensure that Al only acts as a supplement for learning, not a replacement.

Leading Equality in Forensics

Moving towards equal opportunity in Speech and Debate

by Dasha Shabunina

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Broadcast Editor-in-Chief

Over 140,000 high school students in the U.S. participate in Speech and Debate. With such a wide range of students from different backgrounds, and whether it's a low- or high-income school, not everyone has equal oportunities. That's where Equality in Forensics (EIF) comes in.

EIF is a nonprofit student-run organization that works to improve Speech and Debate by providing advice in the form of lectures, videos, articles, and other forms of media and communication. These resources are provided by the national circuit to help students improve their skills. In addition,

t h e organi-

zation has its own YouTube, Instagram, and Discord server designated for discussion amongst competitors and peers.

"The thing I find the best is that it provides an online community where you can reach out to other people around the nation about different events or stuff you want to share," sophomore Harry Xu said.

Xu is the Secretary of the Central Florida Chapter of EIF and is responsible for the coordination and planning of the chapter's affairs and for spreading the word to students across central Florida.

Junior Rohan Dash, who recently won fifth place at Florida's annual Blue Key tournament, is the chapter's vice president. In addition to leading the chapter, he writes articles for the Equality in Forensics News Brief and gives feedback

at Scrimmages (weekly practice sessions in which students receive advice on their speeches).

"I think [the Scrimmages] are going really well," Dash said. "More and more people are signing up, and they're all for free...There's more access to it, and the number of people viewing the articles or the number of people competing — those numbers are just continuing to increase."

In addition to providing resources for students, EIF puts effort into the training amateur judges, who are usually parents and volunteers without much knowledge of the way events work. Another future goal is to fundraise for students who are financially limited and cannot attend tournaments.

"I know that a lot of schools that are underfunded," said sophomore Audrey Hwang, a member of Speech and Debate. "They don't usually do as well at tournaments because

they don't have the same resources, and the better funded schools do have them, so Equality in Forensics helps to even that out and gives resources to everyone."

Dash and Xu are working to spread the word to students across central Florida.

"We already have a poster detailing what Equality in Forensics is, we have a QR code to join our chapter - and also the bigger organization, and saying

what resources are offered and stuff like that, and we've already designed it and everything," Xu said. "So the next step is to just distribute it out at local tournaments, which we're going to do."

strengthens its network

As EIF grows and

of resources, students are getting more aid in Speech and Debate. The hope – and the plan – is that soon, students will get equal opportunities no matter their background and will be able to participate in tournaments financial with Although aid. recently started, EIF has been steadiprogressing, and the future looks promising.

Pine View's Amateur Radio Club

by Jenna Hinck

Match Layout Artist

The most known kind of radio is usually the one in your car, but there are many kinds of radios that do more than just play music. One of those popular kinds of radios is HAM, also known as amateur radios. These radios take their name from operators called Hams.

HAM radios are used for emergency communication, long-distance communication, and education.

Paul Nienaber, an educator from Venice Tamiami Radio Club, has View's HAM club.

to other radio operators around the world using Morse code, voice, and digital data modes of com-

munication," Nienaber said. Sixth grade teacher Marie Rosander sponsors the HAM club,

educating middle schoolers and high schoolers about HAM radios and how to use them. Meetings are led by Nienaber and Steve Phillips, members of Tamiami Radio Club in Venice.

"Amateur radio has been around since the very early 1900's and was created just a few years after the invention of radio communications," Nienaber said.

Remarkably, now, everyone has an individual radio on their cell



been helping run Pine Top: Steve Phillips from Venice Amateur Radio Club uses his radio to communicate with someone in Mauritius, an island off the East Coast of Africa. He demonstrated the components of the radio used for this contact. "We enjoy talking Bottom: Phillips demonstrates how he sets up his antenna and radio. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY MARIE ROSANDER

phone and communications satellites orbit the planet.

The club helps prepare students for the HAM radio certification test, taken after all the club meetings. The test certifies them to operate an amateur radio. Rosander's HAM club has four meetings that occur before students take their HAM Technician License test at the end of January.

Although the club just began in August, this January they will be contacting the International Space Station (ISS). Select students will have a chance to ask the astronauts ques-

"Less than 100 schools get this opportunity every year, we are the

first school in Sarasota who gets to do this - we are very excited," Rosander

amateur radio to contact the ISS and Rosander received the ARISS (Amateur Radio on the International Space Station) grant. Also, through the club meetings, Rosander is developing a background with HAM radios.

Pine View needed an

"I am taking my technician license with everyone else. We will have a permanent radio set up in our yellow building and our own Pine View call sign [a unique call to identify a station]," Rosander said. "Those students who are taking their license will build the antenna and operate the radio."

Even after its goal of contacting the ISS, the club will continue their meet-

"We all share a love of radio communications, and we enjoy talking to other radio operators around the world,"

Nienaber said.



A 'Scientific Whiz': Online



Sophomore Catalina Uribe's thumbnail for her second video, "How Far is Too Far? Exploring the Fifth Science," which discusses the science fiction book "The Fifth Science" and its interesting theories. PHOTO PROVIDED BY CATALINA URIBE

by Athena Erbe

Entertainment Editor

What happens when you combine astrophysics and literature? Sophomore Catalina Uribe did just that, creating a captivating YouTube channel called "Scientific Whiz," which educates through storytelling.

Starting her channel in October of last year, Uribe had already amassed a significant number of subscribers in the first three weeks of posting videos. Before posting, Uribe

spends hours researching and writing the script for her videos to upload quality content.

"I've always wanted to do a You-Tube channel for a while, so I thought that it would be really nice to take the opportunity and just start something I wanted to do as my passion project," she said.

Her journey began with Unidos-Now, a program that strives to help minority groups and inspire individuals in the Hispanic community. Uribe, who is part of their leadership program, was assigned to pick a passion project.

Mariangel Albornoz, Uribe's mentor at UnidosNow, supports her in pursuing this project and recognizes her constant devotion to gaining knowledge.

"Her goal was to share her curiosity with a broader audience." Albornoz said.

Uribe's first video on her channel was "Bevond Earth: NASA's Legacy," in which she explained the many space programs of NASA in a 17-minute immersive video that gained hundreds views.

Her dedication to the topic and her channel is seen through the countless hours Uribe puts into filming and editing her videos. Uribe has

passion for the topics she based her channel on: space science and literature.

"...It's also about stories and literature because I really like literature, and I think that they're very

connected," Uribe said.

Albornoz shared that Uribe has always been very dedicated to whatever she sets her mind to.

"She is a very sweet and humble girl. She does coding, which is very hard, but she has never once complained about it. . . and she is very hardworking and determined," Albor-

> Uribe's journey with her YouTube channel is just beginning. How-

ever, her passion and dedication already set her apart from oth-Whether ers. it's diving into topics like the vastness of space or exploring philosophical concepts in her videos, Uribe has endless enthusiasm for everything she does.

With her resolve, the help of her mentor, friends, and her grow-

ing number of viewers, Uribe continues to share her curiosities with the



PHOTO BY ATHENA ERBE

From Sketch to Stage

Exploring the many talents of junior Ginger Kreithen

by Madelyn Bailey

Humor Editor

Taking time to meticulously perfect every detail of her portrait, junior Ginger Kreithen finishes her latest art piece. Kreithen is a traditional artist that typically works with acrylics, colored pencils, and alcohol markers.

Kreithen has A digital art piece drawn by jusubmitted her art nior Ginger Kreithen including to several compe- portraits of many characters. titions, namely the

juried shows at the Sarasota Art Center. Her art has been displayed in three of these galleries which led to her selling one of her pieces.

At the Sarasota Art Center, Kreithen has worked as a summer camp teacher, helping children develop their own interests and skills in art.

"I love doing it because I get to show other people my passion," she said.

Junior Yaru Cao describes the work that Kreithen does as

"I really like Ginger's work because it really speaks to me personally. As an artist myself, I find it wonderful and I take a lot

of inspiration from her work," Cao said.

> Cao and Kreithen have shared their work with each other through a long-term art exchange.

> "We started this in 2022 and what we do is one person draws one full page," Cao said, "and then we just keep

going like that

every day, taking time to draw different pieces."

Cao and Kreithen's shared art book contains a variety of drawings. One of these, called "Fake Sky", depicts people trying to survive an artificial

Kreithen's chet duck. artistic talents extend to the music world as well; she is the drummer in a rock band called Solar Apocalypse.

"I think it's a great way to express myself and music,"

Kreithen said.

So lar Apocalypse can be found playing sets at Big Top Live Cattlemen Road, Saturon days.

A drawing by Kreithen portraying Kreia girl in the woods holding a lanthen uses the inspira-

tion she gets from music in her drawings.

"I made a piece called 'Synesthesia', is of a drummer," Kreithen wanted explore what it felt like to play the drums." At Pine

View, Kreithen has dis-One of the many crocheted played her creations of Kreithen, a cro- art through the vearbook,

drama club sets, graduation brochures, and the "mole of the day" in Dr. Skipper's classroom. She is also the vice president of the National

Art Honor Society and the president of Crochet Club.

In the future, Kreithen hopes to display her art on Pine View's campus.

"I think it's really important to show school spirit around here, but also express art," Kreithen said.

PHOTOS BY GINGER KREITHEN GRAPHICS BY ATHENA ERBE

Below: Kreithen prepares to play the drums as part of the rock band Solar Apocalypse. Her artwork, Synesthesia, inspired her to start playing the



How to Start a Blog By Ana Easter

Blogging is a great way to boost your creativity and share your passions with others. Starting a blog gives you a creative outlet to share your thoughts, ideas, and passions while also improving your writing skills. Starting a blog might be easier than you think! Following these 10 simple steps will help you start your blog and begin the creative process.

Brainstorm Topics

Make a list of topics you are passionate about to base your blog around. Topics can be anything you are interested in. Be creative!

Find the Right Niche

Determine the topic and target audience for your blog.

Choose a Hosting Platform

Choose the website to use for your blog, some popular platforms are Wordpress, Wix, and Weebly.

Set Up Your Blog

Once you have found your hosting platform and selected a domain, set• up the basic structure of your blog.

Select a Name and Domain

Choose a creative name for your blog, and a unique and memorable domain name.

Design the Website

Now its time to choose a theme and design your blog! Be creative and be sure the design fits your niche.

Organize Your Blog

Add some structure to the blog, set up pages and titles that will make it easily accessible for readers.

Write the First Post

Time to write the first post! Look back at your list of topics and choose one to write about.

Promote Your Blog

Share your blog with friends or to social media to spread your passion with others.

Plan Future Posts

Now, think about what you can post in the future, make a schedule of when you will write new posts.

email the editor at athena.erbe@pineviewtorch.com

What music streaming platform do you use most often?

Pandora Other

9.3%

Youtube Music 9.3%

Apple Music 19.4%

131 students from grades 9-12 were surveyed

Why is yours the best? "Apple Music offers a 'Sing' function where it leaves just the

favorite if you don't want to be distracted by words." - Nathan DeSouza

"Spotify leads the industry in taking money out of artists" hands and into their own pockets. I'd encourage YouTube Music as an alternative for anyone with an interest in

> music." - Ignacio Hurtado

instrumental. I've found that it's very useful for listening to your





Spotify

59.7%

"[Spotify's] family plan is efficient, it's very easy to share with others, ... and there are good options for creating and organizing playlists."

- Ellarose Sherman

Jusic Metrics By Aly Zaleski











Find your newest playlist!

Take this short quiz to see which of these four playlists aligns best with you.

If you could travel to any of these destinations, which one would you choose?

A: Bennington, Vermont

B: The Grand Canyon, Arizona

C: Athens, Greece

D: Paris, France

What outdoor activity do

B: Rock climbing

D: Running with friends

you most identify with? A: Reading under a tree

C: Gardening

What is your beverage of choice to start the day?

A: Lemon water

B: Black coffee

C: Earl grey tea

D: Fruit juice



What is your favorite weather?

Which of these goals most aligns

Where would you most like to live?

A: Drizzling

B: Thunderstorms

C: Sunny and breezy

with your dream life?

A: Protect your peace

D: Become famous

A: On the coast

B: On a sailboat

D: In a big city

B: Visit all seven continents

C: Discover your ancestry

C: In a countryside village

D: Blazing sun



A: Relaxed

B: Thrill-seeking

C: Nostalgic

D: Excited



Mostly As:

You like a chill vibe: think light rain, being in nature, journaling. Check out this playlist that includes calm indie-style hits.

Mostly Bs:

Adventure is your middle name. You're a thrill-seeker. This playlist full of highenergy rock hits will be perfect!

Mostly Cs:

You like to keep it classic. You treasure the past and you love connections. Reflect with these '70s and '80s throwbacks.

Mostly Ds:

You like to get hype. You're happy, outgoing, and here for a good time. Enjoy these 2000s pop party hits.









Bass-ed: Charles Carney

by Elena Herman

Features Edito

Economics and bass guitar: do they complement one another? Maybe in math rock, and certainly in the soul of beloved AP Microeconomics and AP Macroeconomics teacher Charles Carney.

Back in the '80s, Carney was a "big fan" of punk rock. At 18, he dreamed of being able to play along to his favorite songs on bass guitar.

"I told myself, 'By my 19th birthday, I'm going to be able to play'. So, I bought a guitar and just started playing," Carney said.

After self-teaching the basics from cassettes and scales, Carney dove straight into forming a punk band with his college buddies. After some time, the band's genre evolved from punk to jazz funk. While they started out playing house shows and mid-campus concerts, their popularity steadily grew.

"We played from Miami to West Palm, two, three nights a week. You know, toured the East Coast, we put out mu-

sic. We just enjoyed it," Carney said.

Despite moderate success, Carney never

lost his easygoing approach to music, according to his friend Lucie Pierro.

"I think something that's special about

Chuck [is] he doesn't take it all too seriously, **W** **IUU like, he's not ego driven. So, I think when you want to make music and be creative you have to kind of check your

ego at the door... he's someone that emulates that," Pierro said.

Eventually, Carney began to focus on graduate school and teaching, having never considered music as a career. However, once a year, Carney and his friends get together in the studio and jam out.

Now, Carney spends his days teaching seniors about business cycles, financial sectors, and international trade. Known for his chill-guy attitude and charming catchphrases (you're all great people, it's almost Friday), it's fascinating to imagine him as a rockstar.

"I mean, that sort of a dream is, like, I'm just gonna play music festivals, but that's not really a reality when

you have a family," Carney said. "So now it's just sort of like art. It's just for release,

which is for self.

Music may not be the focus of Carney's life anymore, but it's still a large source of joy. He often picks up his acoustic bass, which lives happily in the living room. When his kids were younger, he used to sit down and "make noise" with them, sharing his love of music any way he could

"Chuck takes his family to all these amazing bands and shows and helps them, you know, develop their own love for it," Pierro said. "I think he's... a good role model for that."

At this point, Carney has played in five bands, co-written several songs, and has dedicated hundreds of hours to the bass. Music, to him, is a constant source of fun and happiness.

"When you get older, you know when you're happy like, in your happy place," Carney said. "It just feels good. It's just all good."

Chorale Pals: Emese Percy and John Schweig

by Jakob Roche

Opinion Editor

A little after 1:30 p.m., history teacher John Schweig began to sing Shenandoah. His voice reverberated through the stairwell we sat in.

"Oh, that's nice," Schweig said, pausing to hear the echo.

Now, the stairwell singing wasn't just some random decision – Schweig's been lending his voice to the Key Chorale since October 2024. He sings Bass II, the part that performs the lowest notes in the choir.

Since 1985, Key Chorale has been operating in the Sarasota area. A volunteer-based symphonic chorus, they work with organizations like the Sarasota Orchestra to do "unique, often genre-bending per-

Teachers' Hobbies

What do they do with their hard-earned free time?

formances," as stated online.

However, there's more than just one teacher who performs in the Chorale; math teacher Emese Percy is also a member. She has been singing soprano for Key Chorale since 2016.

"I had to practice a lot [that] first year, so I was a little bit stressed out. Then you get used to it," Percy said.

Schweig, apparently, has not been in the Chorale long enough to feel this relief.

"It's been five of the most difficult weeks I've ever had in the world of music," Schweig said.

Despite that, it is fun, Percy emphasized. She said that once someone's been in the Chorale for as long as she has, it becomes much easier to rehearse — performance day, however, is just as rewarding.

Percy started practicing music at an early age by playing piano. Later, she started singing. In college, however, her time was spent studying.

Similarly, Schweig sang in choirs earlier in life. He came back to singing after trying out for Key Chorale.

"I wanted to get back into a community choir. So, I looked around for one that seemed appropriate for me, and this is the one. I went to see one of their concerts in the spring, and I was really impressed," Schweig said. "And then I saw that Mrs. Percy was in it. So, I was like, 'Oh, I have a connection."

The connection they share goes beyond just teaching, though. Percy is from Hungary, and Schweig lived in Hungary for a few years. "We both have a Hungarian bond," Schweig said.

So, Schweig tried out, and eventually he got notice that he would be able to join Percy in the choir. In the end, when it comes time to perform, both of them agree that it's a euphoric moment. Schweig, Percy, and all the other members bring their voices together. The result is something greater than any one of them could achieve on their own.

Have a Cow: Megan O'Mahony

by Ana Easter

Match Asst. Editor-in-Chief

Despite popular belief, a teacher's day does not solely revolve around school. Like many others, English teacher Megan O'Mahony has a passion that takes up much of her time out of school: caring for her family's dairy cows.

O'Mahony was first introduced to dairy farming when her daughter, who is now in college, was in eighth grade.

"She looked up a bunch of information on the benefits of growing a large animal and raising it, and she really wanted a dairy cow because they don't get butchered. So, she did a ton of research, and she started putting flyers all over the house trying to convince us," said O'Mahony, who was hesitant about taking on the responsibility of caring for a cow at first, but eventually gave in.

Now, almost eight years later, O'Mahony is still involved in caring for dairy cows, sharing the experience with her younger daughter, Kaleen Callahan, who is in eighth grade.

O'Mahony and Callahan now drive out to the Sarasota County Schools farm near McIntosh Middle School every day in the afternoon, and it's there that they care for their cows. The farm is a free space for families in Sarasota County to keep animals. The

milk that comes from the cows there is sold in the lunch lines of schools in Sarasota County.

"With Kaleen, we drive out every day at some point in the afternoon and she has to feed them, walk them, train them, and then she shows them at fairs and cow shows," O'Mahony said.

The training Callahan puts in for her cows is in preparation for state fairs and cow shows, which she participates four times a year. A lot of work goes into preparing for the shows.

"You have to make [the cows] look super sparkly and super fancy, and you have to wear all white with a big belt buckle around your waist," Callahan said. "It's a lot of work to prepare the animals—you have to give them baths and make sure they are super clean because that's one of the standards."

With all the time spent preparing and training for shows, Callahan has been able to bond with the cows.

"It's a great way of communicating with my animals and getting them to know me," Callahan said.

Throughout her time caring for the cows, O'Mahony has learned a lot about cows and farming.

"I have met a ton of people from all over the state that are just so happy to share what they know and help the kids, because really, I do it for the kids. So now I run a 4-H club and am now in charge of a dairy lease program," O'Mahony said.

Many challenges come with caring for a large animal, but despite these, Callahan has found it to be very rewarding and has gained a lot of useful experience.

"It's so much fun. I love my animals, and I love taking care of them. They are very sweet," Callahan said.

HOTOS PROVIDED BY CHARLES CARNEY, JOHN SCHWEIG, EMESE PERCY, AND MEGAN O'MAHONY

From Gymnastics to the Gymnast of has noticed that things she

Match Layout Artist

Listening to music while getting ready for an upcoming CrossFit workout, junior

Molnar picks the up weights, determined to reach a personal best.

Starting freshman year at North Port Gymnastics, Molnar took part in competitive gymnastics for two years and was an Xcel Gold. Xcel Gymnastics is a competitive program developed by USA Gymnastics that provides **>**flexible rewarding all levels.

"I started doing gymnastics at home teaching myself from age six and was inspired by watching Dance Moms. My parents never decided to put me on a competitive team as a child, which is why I started later," Molnar said.

Due to personal reasons, however, Molnar moved on from being a competitive gymnast doing CrossFit and being a gymnastics coach.

Since May, Molnar has been CrossFit training, a high-intensity fitness program that combines varied movements designed to improve physical well-being, cardiovascular fitness, and strength.

"My mom inspired me to do CrossFit as she started it before me. I knew that I still wanted to be active after I stopped gymnastics and that this would be an effective way to do that," Molnar said.

Molnar does CrossFit three times a week for an hour each time. Gymnastics and CrossFit require different muscle groups, and Molnar

could do in gymnastics have gotten harder. However, she continues to focus on Cross-Fit, working hard to achieve her goals.

"I like the challenge of CrossFit and pushing myself to be better," Molnar said. "I can feel myself improving and it gives me motivation to keep going. My future goal for CrossFit is to increase the weight on my lifts. In addition, I want to start running more and maybe entering races."

Along with doing Cross-Fit, Molnar coaches beginners and preschool gymnastics classes now instead of being a gymnast due to the harmful effects gymnastics had on her shin splints, wrists, and an-

"Even though I am not doing gymnastics anymore, I am still involved as a recreational coach. Since I only coach the entry-level kids, you get to see how they grow after a brief time. Some of the younger kids learn gymnastics, discipline, and patience," Molnar said.

Jenna Davids, Molnar's



manager and past coach, has coached gymnastics for over seven years. She explains that taking corrections well and staying focused are important skills, and how they have helped Molnar progress faster as a gymnast and, now, as a coach.

"Kira stood out to me as a coach on her first day of training as she was just shadowing, and five minutes into class, she asked me if she could make corrections and be hands-on," Davids said.

Molnar strives to improve in CrossFit and as a gymnastics coach. Training constantly, Molnar believes there is always room for improvement. Unknowingly, Molnar turned out to be a Left: Kira Molnar prepares to perform a deadlift in the CrossFit gym. Molnar has been training in CrossFit since May. Below: Molnar instructs younger students at gymnastics. Though she no longer practices gymnastics herself, she teaches. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY KIRA **MOLNAR**



natural when coaching class-

"I have noticed that as Kira has become a coach, she has come out of her shell and is always smiling and having a fun time while coaching classes. It takes about six months to be ready to take your classes as a new coach, but Kira was coaching classes by herself in a few weeks," Davids said.

Representing Women in Sports: A Column

by Allie Chung

Co-News Editor

The facts cannot be denied. Out of the thousands of professional sports articles and news reports worldwide, women only make up 14.4%, according to a 2021 UCF study. Correspondingly, women's sports receive an average of 15% of media coverage, despite the fact that females make up 40% of athletes.

This disparity in representation extends beyond the newsroom and is found in coaching positions, sports officials, and funding. The effects are far reaching.

Across schools nationwide, young female athletes experience limited role models, which leads to less opportunities for recognition and, therefore, discouraging participation. In fact, girls quit their sports before 14-years-old at rates twice

Lydia Zhukovsky, a club swimmer for the Sarasota Sharks and high school swimmer for Riverview High School, reflects on this imbalance as a junior who has been swimming for nine years.

"I think girls need to stay in sports throughout their childhood because, despite any negative implications that girls may think sports have on their lives, it's actually great and really good for you, and it brings a lot of opportunities to many young women that they would not have had if they weren't in sports," Zhukovsky said.

While the personal benefits of sports for young women are undeniable, the larger societal view of female athletes is still evolving. Despite the immense value sports offer to girls, there is a noticeable difference in how female

athletes are perceived and supported, especially when compared to their male counterparts. But what is the root of this difference?

The most likely answer: men dominate sports audiences. According to a 2023 Statistica study, 44% of all men consider themselves to be avid sports fans, while only 15% of women state the same. In addition, male athletes create more revenue for the sports community than female athletes. However, should female athletes be overlooked simply because male athletes bring in more financial prosperity? For the sake of female youths, who

should not be focused on making money, the answer is

This disparity is deeply rooted in American society, and addressing it calls for systemic solutions that go beyond surface-level changlike es,

ing the decisions on policy — those are the people who increasing the n u m -

GRAPHIC BY DASHA SHABUNINA

women in sports reporting. Liz Ballard, former PE coach and current social studies teacher at Pine View, explains the need for meaningful policy making efforts to address these underlying issues.

"Because now that I am teaching history, I'm encour-

A STUDY FOUND THAT OUT OF 2,242 SPORTS ARTICLES, 94.9% WERE WRITTEN BY A MAN aging the students really to get involved and run for of-

fice... I'm so different than I

used to be because I would

have been like, no, sports are

everything. And now I'm like,

oh my gosh, the people mak-

FAST FACTS

really are important," Ballard Policy-makers and private companies have already begun to make strides to protect female sports. Grants, such as "The Power of She Fund" and the "Protection of Women

and Girls in Sports Act of 2023," provide funding that attempts to make up for the lack of resources provided by traditional financing. Alongside this prog-

ress, in recent years, female sports engagement has seen a notable increase, reflecting societal shifts and growing opportunities for women in athletics.

instance, Caitlin For Clark, a 22-year-old female basketball sensation, has significantly elevated the appeal of female sports through her

prowess on the court. Clark's impact, often referred to as the Caitlin Clark effect, has been instrumental in generating viewership and revenue for the WNBA. The 2024 NCAA women's championship game, featuring Clark, garnered 18.9 million viewers, surpassing the men's final and becoming the mostwatched basketball game at any level since 2019.

The connection between policies and cultural shifts cannot be overstated. Policies that support female athletes are not merely about providing funding, they are about creating a culture where young women feel encouraged to stay in sports and have opportunities to thrive.



HELENE DE POURTALES WAS THE IST FEMALE OLYMPIAN GOLD MEDALIST, **COMPETING IN** SAILING IN 1900

\$1 **BILLION** IS THE **PROJECTED** REVENUE OF FEMALE SPORTS IN 2024

GRAPHICS BY ALLIE CHUNG

For this reason, Ballard offers the advice that she hopes both her own pupils and students worldwide will heed.

"Go into policy. Go into politics. Be involved."

OLD

1974 THE DATE PHYLLIS GEORGE, BECAME THE FIRST **FEMALE** *50% SPORTSCA* **OF GIRLS DROP** WORK AT A **OUT OF SPORTS** MAJOR TV **BEFORE 17 YEARS** NETWORK,

FAST FACTS

email the editors at dasha.shabunina@pineviewtorch.com & lindsay.luberecki@pineviewtorch.com

Fantastic Fantasy Football

by Aly Zaleski

Torch Assistant Editor-in-Chief

As the NFL season winds down until the 2025 Super Bowl, one question circulates the minds of Pine View students: who is going to win the Pine View teacher fantasy football league?

inating in Orig-2005, students and teachers participated in the league together. However, every year since 2009, ten Pine View teachers create a virtual football team of real players, getting points based on those players' actions out on the field. Still going strong, nearly every schooler high at Pine View has witnessed the antics of teachers in the league.

at who could be behind each username displayed on the ActivPanel and growing into attacks of glitter bombs and paper planes in revenge after a bad loss, the league provides an exciting time for teachers and students alike.

One of the most memorable attacks on the part of Pine View teacher and league member English teacher Christopher Pauling was one that happened in his own home at the hands of not only his arch nemesis social studies teacher Scott Wolfinger, but also his own family. Finding his own home covered in an array of paper rolls after one particular game night

game night
a g a i n s t
Wolfing e r,
P a u l i n g
could only
look back on
what could've
brought the
battle to this
point.
" M r

Wolfinger made it his

made it his per- PHOTOS BY DASHA SHABUNINĀ sonal goal to beat

me and I'm not really sure

why... My goal is to win the league and Mr. Wolfinger's goal is to beat me," Pauling said.

Adding his own perspective on the rivalry, Wolfinger found its roots in the laughs it created as a series of inside jokes and pranks.

"In all honesty, he's really good at taking a joke. He's got a great sense of humor," Wolfinger said.

Echoing a similar sentiment of humor being at the core of the group, social studies teacher and league member Robin Melton stated how not many understand their

jokes.

Pauling, too,
appreciates
the satirical nature of the
group, particularly noting PE Coach
Mark Thorpe's weekly
essay-like
pieces reminiscing on

the weekly wins, losses, and details in be-



Members of the fantasy football league, including Robin Melton, Scott Wolfinger (pictured left), Liz Ballard (pictured middle) and Christopher Pauling (pictured back middle) assemble for a group photo. The league has existed since 2009. PHOTO PROVIDED BY CHRISTOPHER PAULING

tween, sometimes written in satire or even to the melody of a song.

As silly as the league may get, this group of teachers has a serious investment in the friendship that's grown throughout its course.

"The people we have now are our core ten [members] and we've been together for a while. We're all really good friends outside of school... and we know that no matter what,

even if it's not fantasy football related, we're all there for each other," Melton said.

The league has brought this group of teachers together in a way that students don't often get to see. Whether it be the minuteness of a small prank or the longevity of growing friendships and camaraderie, the Pine View teacher fantasy football league has become a well-known tradition.

Torch Tries: Ice Skating

by Elena Herman

Starting with guesses

Features Editor

In Florida, there is almost never a reason to break out a puffy coat. However, Nov. 10, six Torch members bundled up to enjoy a staple holiday experience: ice skating. We assembled at Ellenton Ice and Sports Complex, strapped on our rental skates, and proceeded to ruminate on how poorly the day would go.

"I haven't skated in years, so I might die," sophomore Madelyn Bailey said.

It was a sentiment most of us could agree with. As we

gathered around our locker, each person offered up a unique reason why their performance on the ice might fail to dazzle.

"Um, I'm good at roller skating, and this isn't roller skating," junior Ava Lenerz said.

In contrast, the more laidback members of our group (freshmen Athena Erbe and Anna Zhang) felt reasonably prepared. They had prior skating experience, superb self-esteem, and a good night's sleep, unlike senior Jiayi Zhu.

"I went to sleep at 4:40

a.m. last night, and I think I'm going to make it about 20 minutes before I start looking like one of those baby penguins," Zhu said.

At that point, the air around us was frigid with negativity. We stared hesitantly at the skating rink, sizing up our potentiality for injury and embarrassment. Thankfully, Zhang broke the derelict silence with words of encouragement.

"I think we're all going to do good. I think we're all scared right now, but once we get on the ice, we'll do good," Zhang said.

Feeling assured, we stomped our way onto the ice-skating arena. The crowd inside was diverse: an array of skaters, some clumsy, some competent, wearing anything from summer shorts to chunky mittens. In that offbeat atmosphere, we blended right in.

First up to the ice was Zhang, who impressively stepped straight on, no wall-holding required. Lenerz followed that example, shakily gliding a few feet out. The rest took a careful approach, preferring to clutch scratched une plastic wall for a minute or two.

After that, nothing held us back. We attacked the ice with choppy steps, arms flailing and faces frozen in concentration. Surprisingly, we all kept ourselves upright and avoided collisions.

By the time our noses started to run, we had each found our groove. Bailey, the least skate-savvy, stayed slow and close to a wall. Some were skating as fast as they could (ahem, Lenerz), perhaps in an effort to show off. Unsurpris-

ingly, Zhang and Erbe coasted along nonchalantly, mirroring some hockey dads that shared the riple

Once off the ice for a break, we revealed our true feelings about skating. They were not as winter-wonderland-esque idyllic as one would hope.

"It's difficult, and it hurts my feet," Lenerz said.

Without delay, Zhu expressed her agreement.

"I think I'm a public menace to everyone on this rink, and I'm surprised I haven't collided with anyone

yet. Like, taken down a little kid on accident," Zhu said. Mostly, it seemed our

only positive was the fact that we were with each other. Jaded yet entertained, we went back onto the ice again and again, only pausing to rest our twisted feet. In the end, we left the rink unscathed and smiling.

Afterwards, we shared our overall thoughts of ice skating. It seemed, all in all, that we managed to avoid our fears: no kid-on collisions, penguin impressions, or harrowing falls. That is to say, sometimes mediocracy is worth celebrating.

"I thought I would die, and I didn't, and that's successful," Bailey said.



Torch staff members pose for a group photo before heading onto the rink. The group went ice skating at Ellenton Ice and Sports Complex. PHOTO BY ELENA HERMAN

A Cybertruck Adventure 👽

by Robyn Schoenberg

News Co-Editor

In November 2023, the world's first Cybertrucks were released to the public. With its all-electric drive, Armor Glass, and ultra-hard stainless-steel exoskeleton, this truck is like no other. Its modern, angular, and industrial design make it stand out against the other measly cars of today's age. It's built for any planet.

In a recent press release, Space Z announced that they will be sending the shining star of the company, the Cybertruck, to Mars, and that the truck will be operated by the one and only Ealon Husk. The news spread like a wildfire on social media sites such as Z, formerknown as Chirp.

On the everyday streets of Earth, the Cybertruck's other-worldly build looks out of place, but on another planet, its aesthetics and practical design will be truly understood and appreciated.

At the crack of dawn, press from news sources around the world gathered and civilians from afar watched this momentous occasion in human history. The countdown began: 5, 4, 3, 2, ...1, the Cybertruck was off!

The journey to Mars was long, but the trip was made, and 245 days later, the truck

Husk was giddy with excitement upon touchdown and backed out of the spaceship as soon as it was safe. The Cybertruck goes from 0-60 mph in 2.6 seconds, and Husk quickly took advantage of that.

Cameras sending records back to Earth caught him speeding around the red dunes of the planet. He flaunted the agility of the truck with wheelies, climbed steep mountains, and drove off cliffs. Bright iron oxide dust was flying everywhere and dulled the shiny exterior.

Then, the car started to beep. humming lessened and it came to a stop. The smile left Husk's face when he realized he had drained the car's battery. At this point, he was hundreds of miles away from any charging stations. He faced the unfortunate task of walk-

While Husk was gone, the truck caught the eye of unexpected audience. One Martian alien saw the Cybertruck there in the distance. Thank goodness! This poor alien finally found a place to throw out his lunch.

ing back to the spaceship to

retrieve charging materials.

The Martian had mistaken the masterpiece of a vehicle for a dumpster. He slugged over to the truck, lifted the trunk, and threw in the green glop that was his leftover food.

time it took Husk the ship and back, the Cybertruck became a well-known trash deposit for the Martians. Its trunk was overflowing with green, brown, and sometimes organ reviving its battery life. The martians noticed

this alien being and its odd behavior and started to discern that this was no garbage pail. It was, in fact, a foreign ship!

The youth instinctively began to attack in any way they could. They screamed in unintelligible calls and Husk began to panic once he noticed

placed on the car were able to catch the event. At least, those that weren't covered in waste could. The engineers and scientists of Space Z, alongside the people of Earth, watched the ambush on the Cybertruck.

The Martians grabbed whatever dust and rock material **>** they could and launched it at the ship. The Armor

Glass immediately shattered; the truck couldn't put up a fight.

The storm ceased after more Martian shrieks were heard in the distance; the Martians had been called home for dinner. They ran off and gave Husk a reprieve.

He ran off to the spaceship, only to find that it too had been filled with gloop and glop. He only had one way of getting off Mars, and that was by calling his self-driving Cybercab.

After a long wait, it arrived to take Husk

away. Husk has still yet to return to Earth. Some say he's still on his way, others think the Cybercab ran out of battery, but most say he's too ashamed to show his face again, but it remains un-

known. The only thing Uthat's been heard from him was a final post to Z. "Maybe it was

built for a different planet."



ange waste of indescribable consistency, and the area around it was littered. Despite the truck's maximum payload of 2,500 pounds, the debris weighed down its frame.

At the same time Husk was approaching his beloved truck, a group of young Martians were nearing the oversized trash can as well. As Husk realized his truck was in ruins, he ran to it and helplessly be-

He replied with a gin-

ger emoji. I'm

it takes to stop making dumb decisions, then best believe I'm going to start spinning.

cameras 🖭

threat. He first tried to hide in

and

Husk packed himself in.

Now that the

the trunk, but it was full

of bile, and the main

body was wrecked

as well. The only

place left untouched

was the front

truck had some

trunk,

power,

he was under

Spinning around kind of makes me feel like a leprechaun frolicking through the grass. I highly

recommend it it's pretty great, until you realize you're in fact not a leprechaun and it is in fact possible to slip on carpet. It's like I'm scrambling eggs but in the opposite order. First, whisking the egg,

cracking the egg open (the egg is my head). I feel so much smarter. Thank David. you,

Kenzie Haas: "Go up to random people and make animal noises."* [*Through-

out this next PHOTO BY TIIMOTHY NESANELIS section, there will be ran- dom animal noises written to better illus-

trate the real-life happenings] At first, I thought this resolution would be my ultimate downfall. Neigh! (Let's

be honest though, were any of these resolutions going well?) But if anyone knows a thing or two about moving up the social ladder, it's Ken-

> she didn't get Best Personality for nothing. Mooo! Update: Some things are meant to be kept to yourself and the few select ones loved in your life. Rawr. I tried. I'm not strong enough. If you heard a meow from me in the past few weeks, try your best to consider yourself lucky. It means I

zie... right? After all,

a-doodle-doo! Moral of the story that we all al-

trust you. Cock-

ready knew? New Year's resolutions aren't meant to be followed. If you're feeling brave, though, try these three out. They've been tested, just not proven, and isn't that enough of a reason to try them?

New Year's Resolutions

Editor-in-Chief It's 2025, and that means it's a new year to establish disappointment. I asked three people to give me New Year's resolutions to turn into lifelong habits, as resolutions often do. Am I a better person now? Debatable. Here's how it went: Rohan Dash: "Be

by Jiayi Zhu

kind to everyone around (primarily me)." I will admit, I am not always the kindest person to Rohan Dash. If you haven't met him,

take a second (or hour) to talk to him. Maybe this was Rohan's plea for help and kindness.

If I ask AI to do all the kindness for me, that still counts, right? After all, I have to fight fire with fire (ever heard of RohanGPT? It's pretty self explanatory:

an Here's Instagram DM I sent to Rohan the other day after he won fifth place in a Speech and Debate tournament: "Congratulations

Rohan is AI personified).

achieving fifth at Florida Blue Key! That's an incred-

> never giving NEIGH! him a compliment

PHOTO BY MADELYN BAILEY

ible accomplishment and a testament to your hard work, dedication, and talent. Each round is a challenge, and making it to this level is no small feat. Keep shining and pushing forward - you have a bright future ahead!"

again. Update: Rohan came up to me today and tried to troll me. Key word: "tried." Actually, he trolls me every time I see him. It feels like I have two voices in my head: the first one being a Rohan telling me to choose kindness and the second one being a Rohan telling me to dox his address. Personally, Rohan yaps enough and a single Rohan in my head is enough. The second voice is starting to win, though. Keep an eye out for the front-page home listing in the next issue.

David Ma: "As soon as you wake up, spin around three times to get your mind moving."

Is mind-scramble the secret to David's awesomely chaotic personality? The other day, I turned into the parent loop instead of the shell lot to get to school. Honestly, that should've been my sign to just turn around and go home. Anyway, if spinning around is what

Campus Living

by Lindsay Luberecki

Assistant Editor-In-Chief

Dear reader,

The Torch has covered alleged campus secret societies, cults, and the like many times before. Maybe you recall the cult of Key Club? Or the alleged

secret society of Dr. Skipper? But nothing, and I mean nothing, is as crazy as the secret I'm about to share with you (against my better judgment).

It's not just a subject, not just an after-school club. It's the entirety of the senior class, every year, and

You see, your day may begin at 7:17a.m. when you wheel into the shell lot and rush to your first period class, and it may end when the clock hits 1:01p.m., but for seniors, their days at Pine View never

this year, I'm a part of it.

Because we live here. Again, it's not something I should be telling you about. But this is so fascinating, so crazy, that I (as an informant and good citizen) thought the public just *had* to know the truth.

truly end. Why, you may ask?

It's been a tradition for many years that when the next

class enters their senior year, they're brought together and informed of their privileges and responsibilities for the next ten months at Pine View. That initiation day used to be Locker Day, but since those went away, we've had to get creative

SENIOR MENU

GRAPHIC BY LINDSAY LUBERECKI

- did you really think every-

one was picking up their park-

ing spot tag at the same time?

ileges. Every day, we have

the honor of waking up to

our very own "Good morn-

ing, Pine View" message from

is awoken from their chosen

resting spot for the night. We

can be wherever we please,

but some favorites include

Building 17's second-floor

lounge, the back corner of the

Let's start with our priv-

6:02am

1:01pm

6:30pm

9:00pm

Cafeteria Coffee

Student Union feast

Pizza slices

More feasting

library, and the long couch in the College and Career Center.

We then receive complimentary Student Union coffee before blending in seamlessly with the entering crowd to start our school day.

> You may be thinking, 'I've definitely seen my senior friends leave at 1:00p.m. before." But you see, that's simply a ruse to keep our true lives undercover. We return in the late afternoon, once the insanity that is the elementary and middle school pickup line has dissipated.

Our afternoons are rife with exploring the woods surrounding campus, playing disc golf in Mr.

Pauling's room, cookfouring course meals in the cafeteria, and, of course, playing I Spy in Mr. Wiley's room.

One of favormy ite activities the cooler months, though, is to take advantage of the Don't we all wish we could go back to being kids, with our biggest concern being who would get to the top of the jungle gym first? Now, we can!

When it comes to the weekends, we have much more free time to fill. Some favored activities by this year's senior class include walks to Oscar Scherer to kayak or paddleboard, school-wide games of hide and seek, and day trips to Busch Gardens (of course).

Don't fear, I haven't forgotten to mention the responsibilities I told you about secret

earlier. In exchange for this peculiar living situation we've been granted during the week, we all have to do our part to keep Pine View looking its best.

We have a wheel,



of sorts, and we spin it every week to see what our job will be. Tasks include: watering the quad (after people walk on it), smoothing out the Shell Lot (but it seems like these guys have been slacking off lately), repainting the campus, and troubleshooting the ID camera machines.

So, there's more to being a senior than you might have thought. If you ask your senior friends about it, they're sure to tell you that it's a lie. But you can trust me.

We live here, and one day, you'll get to live here, too. Look at that! Now, you really have something to look forward to.

Dr. Covert himself. At exactly 6:02a.m. (see, the cults are connecting...), every senior

GRAPHIC BY LINDSAY LUBERECKI chore

society

Students Become Teachers

by Timothy Nesanelis

Match Assistant Editor

The children of Pine View's staff have switched places with their parents to prove that the next generation will always be superior. Pauling:

It could have been the hottest day in Florida's history with the way everyone was sweating, but it wasn't the heat that was causing problems. In reality, it was the competition that had all of Pine View's Disc Golf Club dripping buckets.

Juliette Pauling stood with the disc in her hands as an unexpected challenger to her father's title of Pine View's undefeated disc golf master. She needed to land this disc into the basket to officially be crowned Pine View's first asc golf queen. The issue? The basket was over 150 feet away.

She took the last sip of her third Celsius of the day, threw it into the garbage, and took off her sunglasses, revealing a faint tan line that had burned onto her face. This is it: the game-winning throw.

Mr. Pauling watched in horror as her shot soared through the air, bound directly for the metallic chains that stood in the center of the track. Not even the great Dr. Bell could throw a shot like this on the first try.

But alas, the disc made it in, and as the Pine View disc golf line of succession goes, Juliette earned her right to be the official first student advisor of any club in Pine View history. "Director Barbie turned

Disc Golf Barbie, imagine the headlines!" Juliette Paulexclaimed. "Dad...Dr. Bell...I'm sure it's been fun for you two, but, rules are rules, and I think it's best if you let me handle this club myself." Regar:

"Hey! What are here?" doing

The woman's question jolted Julian Regar awake from his half-asleep state. He had just been passing through the office

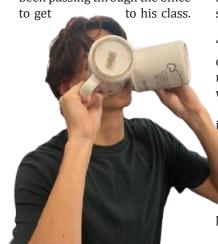


PHOTO BY TIMOTHY NESANELIS

"You're late! Get to office now! Someone is waiting on you!"

She pointed directly at counselor Mr. Regar's office, and while he tried to explain that this was simply a mistake, and that it was his dad that occupied that office, she

wouldn't take no for an answer.

As he was ushered into the office, a student was sitting patiently, and three mugs filled to the brim with piping hot coffee rested on the desk. It was time for him to just get it done and get back to class.

"So what's going on?" Julian asked, sipping on a bit of coffee from the first mug.

"Oh, I wanted to see if I can take AP Calculus BC online concurrently with Algebra 2?" the student asked.

Α question Iulian didn't know the anto: how incredible.

could just 'yes'," Julian thought as he drank half of the second mug's coffee. "What's the worst that could happen?

"If you feel like doing it, knock yourself out!" he responded, guzzling down the entirety of the third mug of coffee. The

dent thanked Iulian and left the room. "I don't know where my dad is but...my own office, nev-

er-ending coffee, student questions?" he whispered to himself. "I think I could get used to this!" Covert:

Click With the alarm blasting the sounds of the greatest hits in Bollywood history, Barrett Covert awakens from a deep slumber. The shoulder of the giant that Barrett sleeps

on slumped down as they slid

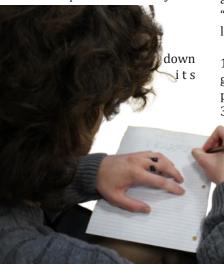


PHOTO BY TIMOTHY NESANELIS

arm the ground slide. giant Due to his alleged escanades as an international Latin pop sensation, Dr. Covert has left the duties of principal to Barrett for the day while he was busy at a concert.

"Alright, first day as the principal of Pine View...what would Dr. Covert do?" Barrett thought while putting on a lucky pair of cargo shorts. "Luckily, he prepared a checklist for me to follow closely."

The list read as follows: 1. Stand on the shoulders of giants; 2. Practice Pitbull impression for at least 2 hours; 3. Pre-record "Attention teachers and students" messages.

> Barrett found no giants like the one they slept on to stand on the shoulders of. Unfortunately, a giant red X had to be etched into the checklist.

Arriving at school,

The other two tasks were no sweat, however. Perfecting a rendition of "Fireball" while simultaneously recording new announcements and messages for the school was a breeze for the child of the great Pitbull Dr. Covert.

Barrett wrote in two marks green check boxes. the latter

"A lot easier than I thought it would be..." Barrett thought. "Another productive day of going 212° completed!"



Scan the QR code to watch teachers Melton, Cetola, and Wilson play Dress to Impress on Roblox

[staff editorial]

Is Respect Required?

For a government based upon ideals of democratically elected representation, there is no greater asset than free speech. Imagine a speech-restricted U.S. with censored debates, news, and — by the deprivation of awareness even thoughts. Thankfully, we have been given the historically unique ability to candidly discuss and disagree with each other. Though this does not guarantee we learn the truth, it guarantees the opportunity to search for truth, and trust in what we have found.

Along with speech, our founding fathers were quick to ensure other essential freedoms in the first amendment: religion, press, assembly, and petition. These five freedoms allow Americans to express their beliefs without persecution. As a result, they create a country based on tolerance and diversity of ideas. Aren't disagreements the sign of a democratic and healthy nation?

Absolutely.

The United States Constitution, the supreme law of the land, was constructed for the purpose of fostering disagreement. With newfound freedom from Britain, our founding fathers were given an opportunity that they never expressly had the privilege of possessing, the right to dispute. The Constitution itself was created out of a lengthy series of disagreements, and the completed document gave the American public the freedom to disagree.

If our country was formed on agreement alone, it would fundamentally not be the same. The liberty to disagree extends to every aspect of American life. Although we wish for political leaders to conform to our own

beliefs, remember that America is built on disagreements.

We will never make change unless we change our way of thinking. We must approach conversations with an open mind in order for them to be productive.

While many are quick to write off somebody else's con-

We will never make change unless we change our way of thinking. We must approach conversations with an open mind in order for them to be productive.

trasting idea as "wrong," it's important to remember why they believe what they believe. These beliefs can be rooted in several environmental and cultural factors, like where and how they grew up or who they were raised by.

We must address their beliefs first in order to inspire them to open up to other ideas.

In many conversations, people hear, but they don't truly listen. They spend their time thinking about their comeback without truly hearing another argument.

This defensive barrier people put up will not be knocked down if we are all busy putting up our own walls. The path to change is a two-way street, and that is the only way to cause productive change.

As the acknowledgement of the need for respect in political debate grows rapidly, something that is equally as important is how this applies in social conversation.

We are often told to approach such conversations

better convey myself as a person."

with respect, although many feel conflicted with the concept of respecting beliefs that go against the foundations of their identity.

Over the past decade, social issues like personal identity, race, and gender have become increasingly politicized, making the previously blurred line even foggier. This has caused many to grow as hateful towards these topics as they are towards their opposing political views.

With race, gender, and war being right behind the economy in the front lines of political conversation, it's hard to try to respect those who actively fight against one's core ideals. While having a disagreement on money is a conversation that can be navigated by most with reason, disagreeing on someone's right to life-affirming care, marriage, or equal treatment is not an opinion that garners respect nor kindness.

Oxford defines respect as, "a strong feeling of approval of somebody/something because of their good qualities or achievements." However, most can't bring themselves to approve of something that they feel directly threatens them or what they stand for.

Because of this, telling someone that respect is required to have a productive conversation undermines progress. What will truly lead to a civil discussion is acknowledgment.

Oxford Languages defines acknowledgment as "accepting that something exists or is true."

Once we are able to acknowledge that someone's opinions and feelings exist, it's possible to move forward with the discussion where both parties feel seen, with the possibility of respect later on.

Social Stigma

by Alex Lieberman

Sci&Tech Editor

Doomscrolling — we've all been there.

As defined by Merriam-Webster, to "doomscroll" is "to spend excessive time online scrolling through new or other content that makes one feel sad, anxious, angry, etc."

Social platforms on which one might doomscroll have essentially transformed how we talk about mental health. Since, a difference has arisen between destignatizing and normalizing disorders.

Sarah Workman is Pine View's Safe School Liaison, and her job is to help reduce student stress and, subsequently, campus violence. She is available for any student who would like to talk in Room 208 of the Green Building.

"Rather than...spending time physically together with each other, I see high schoolers connecting more digitally," she said.

Online, users cannot see body language and make eye contact, or, assuming text communication, hear the tone of voice someone is using. This has changed how counselors talk about social media with patients.

"We're needing to ask students about how much social media they're using and what that's like and really target social media...in a way that used to be reserved more for, like, illegal drugs, alcohol, risky... behavior. Now, social media is in that category, too," Workman explained.

These apps are being treated so seriously because they have the potential to gravely derail mental health. Consistently seeing disorders

portrayed online, sometimes incorrectly, can have several effects. For example, it can lead to improper self-diagnosis of issues and can also cause people to treat mental health issues as something that can be taken lightly, or something that everybody has to the same degree.

Robin Melton, Pine View's AP Psychology teacher, identified this trend herself.

"Because there's more awareness of mental health today, people ... may not realize that you can have a bad day here and there. That does not mean that you're depressed," she said.

It's also important to remember that mental health is unique to everyone, she mentioned.

"[People] feel that if they have one symptom, that all of a sudden they have [a disorder] and that's not the case," she said.

Additionally, increased portrayal of disorders online can normalize these disabilities and take away their legitimacy. Destignatizing, however, is a better pattern for talking about mental health.

"When we destigmatize, we're creating space to acknowledge two things at the same time, which is [that] these [mental health disorders] are common issues people face and they're also serious," Workman said.

Normalizing has the opposite effect, making people believe that mental health disorders are not as severe and potentially life-threatening as they are.

The distinguishment between normalizing and destigmatizing mental health on social media can be hard to perceive.

As Workman said, "It is a fine line, isn't it?"

[student voices]

What would you change about college applications?



Michael Cochran, Senior

"Make it so that everything is on one website, instead of 50 different ones that you have to link together.

I wish that every university I applied to had the option to do an in-person interview in order to



I would make it so teacher recommendation letters are optional instead of required to represent more diverse relationships with people of importance to a college applicant."



Rayna Parker, Senior

What's an Al 'Opinion'?

They're real, and they're harmful.

by Katerina Mazzo

Asst. Web Editor-in-Chief

Today, artificial intelligence (AI) can answer any of our questions in plain language. Because of this, it has become a popular choice for many people seeking information. However, not everyone is aware of the credibility issues of AI and how its biased outputs are harmful.

AI chatbots use advanced algorithms in order to come up with quick and accurate responses. These algorithms use training data to help them learn and improve.

This data comes from a selection of sources which is decided by the team of researchers, engineers, and scientists who programmed the chatbot. Where that data is acquired from and the process by which it is chosen shows the key differences between different AI models.

This brings up a key point: different AI platforms can have contrasting responses to the same question.

These different responses are an effect of different datasets used. AI forms its own 'opinion' based on the information available to it. When asking a simple question such as, "Do you like broccoli?" AI might output something along the lines of, "I think broccoli is great."

In this response, we can clearly see an opinion. From this response, it can be concluded that the data this particular AI platform has learned from contains biases that led to the opinion that broccoli is good rather than bad.

Another example of a bias in a chatbot's responses can be shown by the Meta AI chatbot. If you were to ask Meta AI to show you the best food in the world, it might show you a picture of food that you don't necessarily think is the best food.

A question like "What's the best food in the world?" is opinion-based, so you get an inherently opinionated response in return.

Bias in AI's opinions may go beyond preferences in food. It can also be expressed in more serious ways, like political, racial or gender bias. This is when opinions in AI become harmful.

When asking AI for its opinion about a controversial topic, at first, it might change the subject or it may not even answer the question at all. Some AI models output that because they aren't driven by personal experiences, they therefore cannot respond with an opinion.

While it is certainly true that AI models don't have opin-

What's your favorite ice cream flavor?

Chat GPT: If I could taste ice cream, I imagine I'd enjoy something classic like chocolate chip cookie dough.

Meta AI: Hands down it's got to be cookies and cream!

Microsoft Copilot: If I had taste buds, I might be partial to a classic like chocolate or something adventurous like pistachio.



ions in the traditional sense, the reason they are programmed to avoid giving answers to controversial topics is because any other response would be an opinion (or at least a semblance of one) that the AI has formed based on the data it has studied.

With bias being a factor in AI responses, it's ultimately better to form a unique opinion rather than relying on AI to give its conclusions.

GRAPHIC BY ANNA ZHANG INFORMATION PROVIDED BY KATERINA MAZZO

The Supreme Court

WHAT DO PEOPLE THINK?



JUDICIARY
ACT OF
1869 SET
THE
NUMBER OF
SUPREME
COURT
JUSTICES
TO NINE



SUMMARY

THE SUPREME COURT WAS DESIGNED TO INTERPRET LAWS AND THE CONSTITUTION, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER DECISIONS REFLECT THE VIEWS OF AMERICANS OR NOT. HERE IS DATA FROM GALLUP IN OCT. 2024 ABOUT PARTISAN TRUST IN THE U.S. SUPREME COURT OVER TIME

CHECKS AND BALANCES:
THE PRESIDENT
NOMINATES SUPREME
COURT JUSTICES. THE
SENATE CONFIRMS THEM
WITH A SIMPLE
MAJORITY VOTE.

GRAPHIC BY ALLIE CHUNG
INFORMATION PROVIDED BY TERRY SHEN

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events and opinions of relevance to students grades nine through twelve. The Torch is published four times a year by Pine View School and maintains membership in the Florida Scholastic Press Association. Press run is 800 copies.

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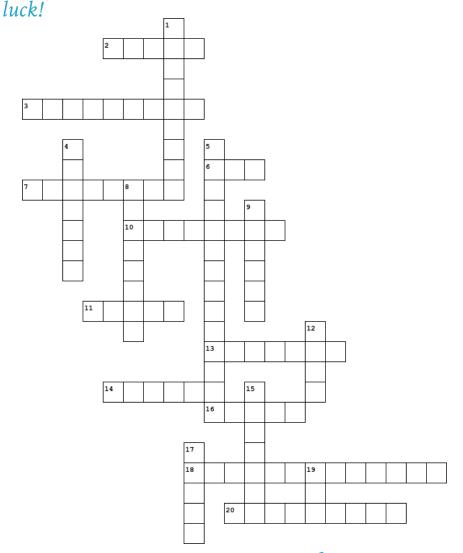
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T H E O R C R O S S W O R D H

Hints correspond to information shared in the stories throughout this issue, including through QR codes. The first person to bring their completed version in Room 117 in Building 17 will win a \$5 gift card. Good



across

- 2. How many years has Megan O'Mahony had dairy cows?
- 3. What department is Trump planning on closing while in office?
- 6. Who does Ginger Kreithen do an art exchange with?
- 7. What does Kira Molnar do three times a week?
- 10. Who sponsors Pine View's Amateur Radio Club?
- 11. Which room do the seniors play "I Spy" in? (Hint: check humor)
- 13. Who is in Room 208?
- 14. What AI model says it likes cookies and cream?
- 16. Which Torch staff member got onto the ice first?
- 18. Despite it affecting one in 10 women, _____ is misdiagnosed 75.2% of the time.
- 20. Who drove the Cybertruck to Mars? (Hint: full name)

down

- 1. What book reminded Zhu of adventure?
- 4. What is the small population state mentioned in the Electoral College story?
- 5. What is the name of Catalina Uribe's YouTube channel?
- 8. What song did Barrett Covert sing?
- 9. What is a popular website for a blog? (Hint: third listed)
- 12. Who told Jiayi Zhu to make random animal noises?
- 15. What is the least used music streaming platform?
- 17. Which math teacher sings in Key Chorale?
- 19. How many Pine View teachers regularly participate in a Fantasy Football league together?

The Conversation Pit

Embracing the adventure

Recently, I've been reading "The Hobbit" by J.R.R. Tolkien, which, if you're not familiar with it, follows the venturesome journeys of Bilbo Baggins, an unsuspecting hobbit who eventually realizes adventure isn't so bad after all.

"The Hobbit" has reminded me of one of my favorite things in the world. If you're looking for it, adventure is all around us. Rather than it being solely about the thrill or rush, adventure is also about finding the beauty in the discomfort.

Amongst navigating both the minutiae of everyday life and the overwhelming state of the world, it can sometimes feel like there is no room to do things for the sake of experiencing them, let alone finding the opportunity. While easier said than done, sometimes I find the greatest relief in allowing myself the time to simply escape from the day-to-day.

It's as simple as exploring a new place, with only the things I need and curiosity tucked in my back pocket. A spot I now frequently visit, quietly hidden away

amongst the trees in a park, was once just a place undiscovered. With an open mind and willingness to learn, abnormality can soon become an object or place of familiarity. Soon, I'll be applying for my first job and enrolling in college. While both daunting and unfamiliar to me, I know the prospects of what's to come will be more than worth it.



Jiayi Zhu Editor-in-Chief

No matter how trite, there will always be something to be said about stepping outside of your comfort zone. In the novel "The Kite Runner," Khaled Hosseini illustrates it well: "I opened

my mouth, almost said something. Almost. The rest of my life might have turned out differently if I had. But I didn't."

Have you ever met somebody who feels like adventure

incarnate? Have you ever been to a place that overwhelms you with its beauty? Have you ever felt like you've lived all that life has to offer? Will you ever?

Live for those firsts and for the moments to come. In the new year, here's a reminder to take life's adventures for what they are: infinite.

A special thank you to our sponsors...

Rather than it being

solely about the thrill or

rush, adventure is also

about finding the beau-

ty in the discomfort.

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